Chithiran Ragunath’s “Thodarbu Yellaiku Veliye”

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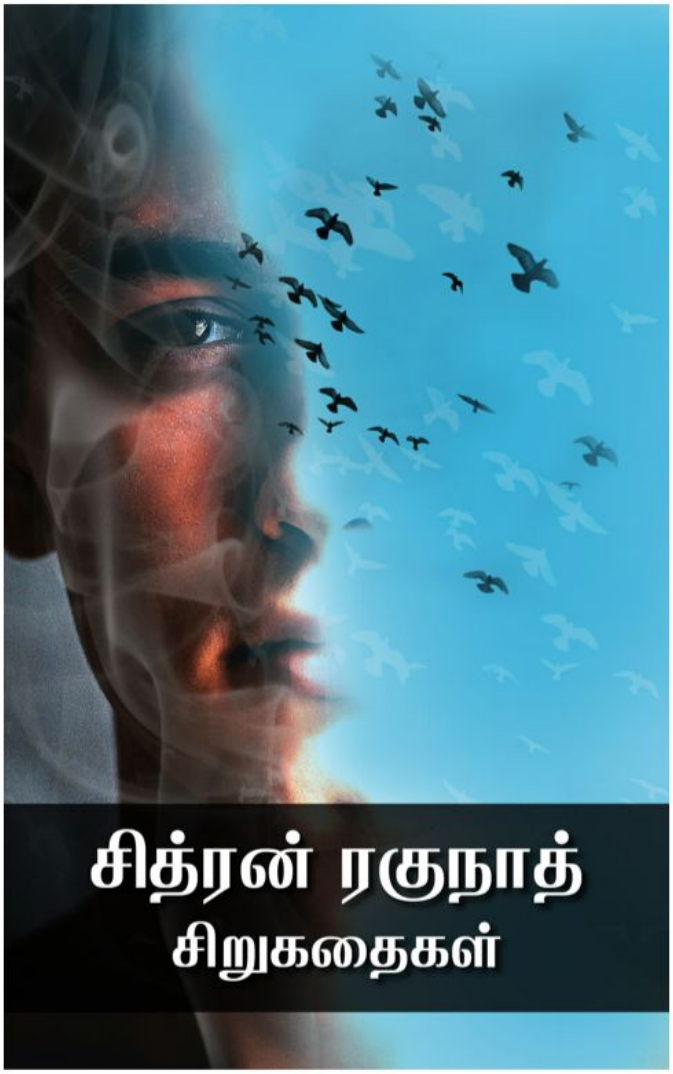

In the short story **“Padagu”** from Chithiran Ragunath’s collection “Thodarbu Yellaiku Veliye,” the narrative revolves around a couple. The man shares many love stories from his past, while the woman reflects on someone who had unrequited feelings for her. Before she could let go of these feelings, her parents arranged her marriage. During their honeymoon, when he inquires about her past, she remembers that period poignantly, likening it to a flower being crushed before it could bloom.

“Maraka Mudiyathavan” tells the story of a woman with an extraordinary memory, who can recall everyone she meets. While those around her admire her memory as a gift, it can be a source of frustration for her if she cannot remember someone or where they met. One day, she encounters a man she cannot place in her memory. Her inability to recall who he is drives her to follow him throughout her day, trying to remember. This encounter becomes unforgettable, marking her memory for the rest of her life.

“Pulam” tells the story of two friends. one who has settled in Chennai and another who dreams of doing the same, inspired by his friend’s success. One day, when they meet, the settled friend and his wife complains about how difficult and unfair life in Chennai is, making the aspiring friend doubt his decision. During a drive, the settled friend explains that his negative comments were due to personal issues and setbacks, not the city itself. He reassures him that Chennai is a place where anyone can thrive and succeed if they believe in their potential. This story highlights Chennai as a city of opportunity where people from any background can grow and prosper.

“Thani Vazhi” is a story about two friends with contrasting outlooks on life and relationships. One friend is very practical and never takes relationships too seriously, while the other is highly sensitive and deeply dependent on his relationships. When they are together, their differing emotions and attitudes towards relationships often clash. The sensitive friend experiences great joy in his relationships, but eventually, he faces heartbreak, leading him to start drinking. Although his practical friend notices his emotional pain, he remains distant. One day, the sensitive friend begs the practical one to stay with him for just one last time to see her, expressing his deep emotional turmoil. This moment makes the practical friend realize the extent of his friend’s pain and feel guilty for not being there for him. However, almost immediately, he gives himself a light slap on the face and reminds himself to “be practical,” continuing to suppress his emotions.

“Veedu” tells the story of a special bond between a house owner and his tenant. The house owner formed a close relationship with the tenant after his own son and his family moved away. When his son returns and informs him that they need to vacate the tenant because they want to move back in, the house owner is troubled. During the journey from the airport to the house, he contemplates how he doesn’t want his tenant to leave, even preferring that his son stay elsewhere, but he struggles with how to express this.

Upon arriving home, the owner is surprised to find that his son also wants the tenant family to stay. His son proposes that they all live together in the house. This change of heart in the son stems from his own experience as a tenant, where he felt the love and care of his house owner and understood the pain of being asked to leave. The story beautifully captures the relationship between the house owner and the tenant, highlighting the unexpected and heartwarming connection that can form between people.

“Arai” (Room) tells the story of an old man and a junior guy who become very close. The old man, once famous and well-known in his time, unexpectedly meets the young man and even lends him a place to stay. However, there’s one room in the house that the

young man is not allowed to open, and the old man avoids the topic whenever it's brought up, which only piques the young man's curiosity.

After seven years, the old man finally opens the door for him. Inside, the room is half-burned, with the remaining space filled with books. The old man then shares his story: despite his career success, he failed in his personal life. He lost his wife and was left alone when his only son became addicted to drugs and eventually died. He explains how these tragic events changed his life, revealing the painful history behind the mysterious room.

"Jananam" explores the intense and often overlooked pain of childbirth, not just for humans but for animals as well. The story centers on a cow going through the agony of delivery, vividly describing each moment and the struggles faced by the people around her, including the doctor and the cow's owner. The narrative captures the high tension and emotional stakes, making the reader's heart race with each development. Ultimately, the story reveals the outcome of the calf's birth and its final condition, offering a real-time experience of the event.

"Ducati" tells the story of a couple where the guy often feels that his girlfriend is less interested in their relationship because she frequently arrives late to their planned meetings, always giving excuses. One day, as he waits for her in a restaurant, he notices a couple arriving on a Ducati bike. He is mesmerized by their behavior, their proposal, and their carefree trip to the beach. He admires their boldness and feels a mix of shyness and awe at how they forget they are in public.

After they leave, his girlfriend finally arrives and apologizes for being late. She playfully teases him and lightens the mood with her humor and affection. Without saying a word, the waiter, having observed the situation, approaches them. The guy then asks the waiter, "Can I get a guitar?" implying he is inspired to create a romantic moment, much like the one he witnessed with the Ducati couple.

"Thirupam" tells the story of a student whose friend's house is near his college professor's home. Whenever he passes by that house, he feels uneasy and fearful. This stems from an incident when he was visiting his friend. On his way back, the professor's wife stopped him and began threatening him, saying that if he didn't behave well and be more like his friend, his internal marks would be deducted. Despite his friend attending a different college, she even spoke poorly about him to his parents. The neighborhood criticized her for her loud talk and attitude, which made the student irritated with his professor even in class. He felt the professor was indifferent and didn't care about what students said to him during lectures.

However, one day, he witnessed a moment that changed his perspective. The professor showed that he could control his overbearing wife, which gave the student a sense of relief and newfound respect for his professor.

Some other notable narratives from his collection include…